



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

# EVOLVING PERSPECTIVES

RESULTS FROM THE INTERNATIONAL MEN AND GENDER EQUALITY SURVEY (IMAGES) IN CENTRAL UGANDA

## **ABOUT THIS STUDY**

The International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES) in Central Region of Uganda included a population-based quantitative survey with women and men aged 15 to 49, as well as qualitative research focused on the intersection between violence against women and violence against children. Promundo-US produced this study in collaboration with the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW). Research partners included Economic Development Initiatives (EDI) Limited and the ICRW Africa Regional Office.

## **ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL MEN AND GENDER EQUALITY SURVEY (IMAGES)**

The International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES) is a comprehensive, multi-country study on men's and women's realities, practices, and attitudes with regard to gender norms, gender-equality policies, household dynamics, caregiving and fatherhood, domestic violence, sexual diversity, health, and economic stress, among other topics. Promundo and ICRW created IMAGES in 2008. As of 2018, IMAGES and IMAGES-inspired studies have been carried out in more than 35 countries. IMAGES surveys are generally conducted together with qualitative research to map masculinities, contextualize survey results, or provide detailed life histories that illuminate quantitative findings. The questionnaire is adapted to country and regional contexts, with approximately two-thirds of the questions being standard across settings. For more information, see: [www.promundoglobal.org/images](http://www.promundoglobal.org/images).

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2019

This report is dedicated to the memory of Stella Mukasa, the International Center for Research on Women's Regional Director for Africa, a fierce advocate for gender equality and women's rights in Uganda and globally.

**May her legacy inspire all of us to work for a better, more just world.**

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In Uganda, rates of violence against women are alarmingly high. Approximately half of ever-married women report ever experiencing physical or sexual violence perpetrated by their partner or spouse (Uganda Bureau of Statistics [UBOS] & ICF, 2018). The rates of violence against adolescent girls in Uganda are the highest in the world, with 53 percent of adolescent girls experiencing physical violence between the ages of 15 and 19 (MacQuarrie, Mallick, & Allen, 2017). While many studies have been conducted in Uganda on related subjects – such as gender-based violence, sexual and reproductive health, and violence against children – few focus specifically on both men’s and women’s attitudes and practices related to gender equality across a wide range of topics. **The International Men and Gender Equality Survey (IMAGES), a population-based quantitative survey with more than 2,000 respondents conducted in Central Uganda in 2017, not only contributes to a growing evidence base on violence, gender, and health, but is also one of the first efforts in the country to explore men’s positioning on gender equality.**

## FINDINGS FROM IMAGES CENTRAL UGANDA

**Overall, IMAGES findings in Central Uganda affirm the urgent need to address inequitable attitudes and norms related to gender.** Mirroring global research, as well as findings from other IMAGES studies in East Africa, IMAGES Central Uganda exposes inequities that must be tackled to make progress on important development outcomes, including reducing the high rates of intimate partner violence and violence against children. IMAGES findings also highlight the role that men and boys play in both maintaining and dismantling gender inequality. Ending violence and promoting gender equality bring benefits to everyone – women, children, and men – and to society overall.

**In general, IMAGES findings suggest limited support for, and perhaps some backlash against, ideas around gender equality** in Central Uganda. Many men subscribe to a zero-sum view of equality – over half of male survey respondents said more rights for women mean that men lose out, and one in three agreed that when women work, they are taking jobs away from men. Fewer women, though still a relatively large proportion, similarly supported these views. Men also generally held more inequitable attitudes about gender roles within the household, and perceptions of existing domestic violence legislation were quite negative – three-quarters of men surveyed agreed that women were using these laws to dominate men, as did about half of women.

**A key concern in Central Uganda is violence, with IMAGES findings echoing other studies to show that violence against women and children occurs at alarmingly high rates.** In the IMAGES survey, approximately three in ten respondents reported ever seeing or hearing their mother being beaten by her male partner, and a higher proportion reported witnessing their mother being yelled at and/or humiliated

by her male partner. One in four respondents reported experiencing some type of physical violence as a child, including being beaten, slapped, kicked, or punched by a parent. The landscape of intimate partner violence is also concerning – 52 percent of ever-partnered women reported experiencing some form of physical or sexual violence at the hands of an intimate partner in their lifetime. Men’s admission to using these types of violence, while much lower, was still at 40 percent, highlighting the normativity of this behavior. Findings also reveal the frequent overlap between violence against women and violence against children: about one in three men has used both harsh physical discipline and physical or sexual intimate partner violence in their lifetime; and one in two women who have been the victims of this violence have used violence against their children as well.

**However, IMAGES Central Uganda shows evidence of improvement around the use of violence against children.** While rates of both physical and non-physical harsh discipline remain high – close to six in ten respondents reported ever hitting their child with an object such as a paddle, stick, or broom – respondents reported using less harsh punishment with their children than they themselves experienced in their childhood. Instead, there were reports of frequent use of positive disciplining techniques. These techniques include, for example, explaining why the child’s behavior was wrong and complimenting or praising the child when they do something well. The prevalent use of positive discipline suggests an entry point to build upon existing positive practices in Central Uganda and reduce other forms of harsh child punishment within the home.

**By looking into household dynamics in childhood and nowadays, IMAGES Central Uganda reveals the potential for men’s engagement in care work to be transmitted intergenerationally (although only from the perspective of male respondents).** Respondents were asked about gendered childhood experiences, including their father’s (or their mother’s male partner’s) participation in housework in their childhood homes. Men whose male model actively participated in tasks typically considered women’s work (such as cooking, cleaning, and washing clothes), were over four times more likely to report participating in these currently than those who had uninvolved male figures in their childhood (36 percent vs. 8 percent respectively). However, men’s reported participation in housework clashes with women’s perceptions – men report sharing or taking on the burden of these tasks about nine times more often than the women in the sample report their partners doing so (43 percent of men vs. 5 percent of women). In spite of this, the vast majority of men (89 percent) and women (85 percent) said they were satisfied with the division of household work, conforming to gendered expectations of appropriate roles in the family.

**Men’s and women’s reports of how decisions are made in their relationships are more equitable than their personal attitudes and perceived community expectations would indicate.** Seventy-eight percent of men and 58 percent of women think a man should have the final word about decisions in the home. And yet, about 90 percent of men and 80 percent of women feel their community expects men to dominate household decisions, and a similar proportion of men and women agreed that men in their communities do, in fact, dominate in this regard. Similar, if less pronounced, trends are also found when inquiring about women’s right to challenge their partners’ opinions or decisions. The findings suggest that, although men’s dominance in household decisions is perceived to be the norm, individual attitudes as well as reported practices are somewhat more equitable.

**As with domestic tasks, the data shows that women do the vast majority of caregiving, but men and women differ in their reporting of men's participation in care work.** Both men and women reported women generally do the majority of routine childcare tasks like diapering, feeding, and bathing. Men, and to a lesser extent women, reported greater male participation in playing with the child, and helping with homework. But, overall, men are much more likely than women to report childcare tasks are shared equally or done together. Yet, most respondents – 72 percent of men and 64 percent of women – believe men spend too little time with their children due to their work, suggesting fatherhood is an important aspect of men's identities and that there is a strong desire for men to spend more time with children.

**IMAGES Central Uganda also asked about sexual and reproductive health, finding the nature of respondents' reported first sexual experiences varied and revealing a gap in men's and women's experiences and perceptions of sexual coercion and consent.** Three in ten women reported a first sexual experience that was nonconsensual: in these cases, women reported being either forced to have sex (13 percent) or not wanting to have sex but had sex anyway (16 percent). In contrast, less than one in ten men reported an experience of coerced or unwanted first sex (5 percent). A similar proportion of women and men, about a third, reported using a condom during their first sexual encounter. However, women who were forced or coerced into their first sexual experience were less likely to report condom use at first sex compared to women who characterized their experience as consensual (22 percent vs. 41 percent).

**Data from IMAGES Central Uganda also highlight important differences related to health and well-being between men and women; some of which are linked to ideas about masculinity and to gender inequalities in power and resources.** Consistent with other research around masculinities and risk-taking behavior, the survey showed that women are more likely to access physical health services, but more men seek medical attention for injuries and accidents than women. High levels of depression were detected among both men and women, with men expressing particular dissatisfaction about life as a whole. Yet, when asked about their sense of control over important and day-to-day decisions in their lives, men felt in charge much more so than women. Perhaps due to the framing of questions and/or possible embarrassment around disclosure of alcohol use, participants reported surprisingly low rates of alcohol use and abuse, and these results should be interpreted with caution.

## LOOKING FORWARD

The IMAGES Central Uganda findings illuminate potential areas for promoting gender equality and achieving key health and development outcomes, and specifically, for making progress on Uganda's goals to eliminate violence against women and against children. The following actions are recommended to ensure that policies, programs, and public education campaigns aimed at engaging men, alongside women, advance towards these goals:

- **Push for a transformation of gender attitudes and norms:** Advocacy and outreach efforts, interventions, and policies should build support for gender equality and freedom from violence. Positive, or non-deficit, approaches that encourage men's and women's existing equitable beliefs, and that highlight the clear gap between perceptions of the community and people's own attitudes and behaviors, may be more effective than messaging that simply highlights, for example, the high rate of violence and the harm that it causes.
- **Build on, and boost the visibility of, existing positive behaviors:** When it comes to practices, men and women are already reporting high levels of positive parenting behaviors, as well as individual attitudes that are less supportive of violence compared to perceived community norms. Many men are also reporting accompanying their partners to antenatal care visits and seeking support from others when they feel upset or stressed. Promoting these positive, contextually-relevant behaviors through programs and campaigns can begin to shift norms and drive positive change.
- **Implement programs to improve parenting as well as couples' relationship quality, specifically targeting men:** Both men and women report quite inequitable relationships and low rates of men's involvement in the household and caregiving. The analysis also finds that quarreling and low communication can lead to negative outcomes such as intimate partner violence and lower rates of contraceptive use. This suggests the importance of couple-focused approaches, which build relationship skills, promote communication, and focus on more equitable power dynamics, as well as of positive, nonviolent parenting.
- **Work with adolescents to shift attitudes and build skills around gender equality:** Given high rates of sexual violence and coerced or forced experiences of first sex (as also reported in the Uganda Violence against Children Survey 2018), it is important to work with young people, as well as the adults who care for them – parents and guardians, teachers, and health providers.
- **Strengthen violence prevention and response laws and policies, appropriately budget for and fund their implementation, monitor their enforcement, and target public opinion to highlight the benefits of these policies:** IMAGES data show little support for laws to ban harsh

punishment of children at home or at school and mixed feelings about laws around domestic violence, with large proportions of men (but also women) expressing that women are taking advantage of the laws to dominate men and that the laws contribute to conflict in the family. Raising public awareness of the benefits of these policies, as well as their fair enforcement, can increase public support for them.

- **Finally, encourage more research to better understand and respond to multiple intersecting forms of violence:** While there has been much advancement in the past decade (e.g. the Lancet Series on VAWG, including Ellsberg et al. 2015); it is important to continue to build upon the gaps in the violence prevention and response fields to ensure that we are effectively working towards gender equality and lives that are free from violence.

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